

Senator is saying has been established; it is what the CBO has told us will bring in savings on our budget deficit. Taxpayers have a reason to celebrate the enactment of the Affordable Care Act.

There is one other reason to celebrate the year's anniversary of the enactment of this legislation. Let me give one more example. A couple of weeks ago I was at the Greater Baden Health Center located about 7 or 8 miles from where we are today. They are doing something about the infant mortality rate in our community. We have too high of an infant mortality rate because of low birth weight babies. Some do not survive and become part of our infant mortality numbers in America where we are much higher than we should be. Others survive and have complications that need to be addressed by our health care system, making it challenging for the infant and expensive for our society.

At the Greater Baden Health Center, they are doing something about that situation. They are expanding their qualified health center to include prenatal care so pregnant women can get the type of attention they need to have healthy babies. That money comes from the Affordable Care Act because of the expansion of our qualified health centers.

We all celebrate what we are able to accomplish. It will keep our children healthier and save us money and have less use of the emergency rooms by expanding care at our qualified centers.

Madam President, if you are concerned about health disparities in America—and you have reason to be—minorities are two times more likely to suffer from diabetes and 33 percent more likely to die from heart disease. In the African-American community, the infant mortality rate is 2.3 times higher than the White community. When we look at the number of people who have access to health care and health insurance, the minority population represents one-third. Yet they are one-half of the people who do not have health insurance.

I think we all agree that we need to do something about that situation. That is not right in our sense of fairness. But let me give one more reason it will save us money.

A study done at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland points out that we can save \$260 billion in excess direct medical care costs if we can deal with the minority health disparities. We had done something about that in the Affordable Care Act. An amendment that I was proud to offer established the Institute for Minority Health and Health Disparities within the National Institutes of Health. We have developed minority health and disparity offices in each of our agencies that deal with health care to do something about health disparities in America. We can all celebrate that we are able to move that forward in the Affordable Care Act.

We should all take pride that America at long last, after decades of unsuccessful attempts, has acted. Health care is a right, not a privilege. As our dear friend, the late Senator Kennedy, said: We no longer have a sick care system. We have taken action to include all under health care in America.

I understand the Republicans in the House want to repeal each and every one of these improvements and accomplishments. They offer no hope of taking up these issues in a serious manner during this Congress. Speaking on behalf of our seniors, speaking on behalf of our small business owners, speaking on behalf of the consumers of health insurance in America, speaking on behalf of what is right, as far as covering and making sure everyone has access to affordable care, we do not want to see that happen. We do not want to move backwards. We have reason to celebrate the accomplishments of moving forward with health care. We want to move forward, not back, and continue to build on an American health care system that provides affordable quality care to all Americans.

Madam President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

GAS PRICES ON THE RISE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, the rising cost of gasoline has become a major source of concern for most Americans. With prices in most States moving closer and closer to \$4 a gallon, and already higher in some areas, America has a right to know where the President and Democrats in Congress stand on the issue.

Let me begin this morning with a simple observation that it is no accident gas prices are skyrocketing at a time when Democrats control two-thirds of official Washington. It is no secret Democratic leaders in Washington do not particularly care for this issue. Ask them about gas prices and chances are they will tell you about some car they plan to build and have ready for production about 25 years down the road. Suggest we tap some of our domestic sources of oil and they will give you 101 reasons we cannot and how that is not a real solution anyway because it will take too long to get it out of the ground.

We have been having that particular argument for decades now—literally

for decades. Then they have the audacity to step in front of the cameras and tell us they are all for reducing our dependence on foreign sources of oil. With what—windmills?

It is time to be serious about a serious problem. The fact is, there is no reason in the world we cannot invest in future technologies at the same time we are tapping into the resources we already have right here at home and creating jobs while we do it. But Democrats do not seem to like that idea. They would rather force a change in behavior now than giving struggling American families the relief they need from the rising gas prices.

Do not listen to what they say on the issue, watch what they do. Here is what they have done.

Over the past 2 years, the Obama administration has delayed, revoked, suspended, or canceled an enormous range of development opportunities.

One month after the President took office, his administration canceled 77 oil and gas leases in Utah. Once the review was complete, the administration refused to reinstate even a single one.

A month after that, the administration shortened lease terms for offshore oil and gas production and raised fees for permit applications.

Last January, it announced new restrictions for onshore oil and gas exploration in the mountain West.

Last February, it denied a permit to build a bridge needed to access an oil-producing field in Alaska, after the Environmental Protection Agency designated a nearby river an aquatic resource of national importance.

Last April, the administration suspended 61 oil and gas leases in Montana that were issued in 2008 and then announced that all oil and gas leases in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota would be delayed indefinitely.

Last May, the President announced a 6-month moratorium on deepwater drilling—a moratorium that has been repeatedly struck down in the courts.

The list of actions such as these go on and on, and that is to say nothing of the proposed new Environmental Protection Agency regulations on energy that would either cause oil refineries to pass along their resulting new production costs to consumers at the pump or drive them and their jobs overseas.

Let there be no doubt, the efforts of the White House are costing jobs and putting even more pressure on gas prices. Paying lip service to the public's concerns will not solve the problem. Unlocking our own sources of energy at home would help immensely.

Just to give an idea of the kind of resources we have right here at home, consider that just one 2,000-acre section of the nonwilderness sections of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, along with the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas, have enough recoverable oil to replace crude imports from the Persian Gulf for nearly 65 years—65 years.

The problem is not that we need to look elsewhere for energy. The problem

is that Democrats in Washington will not let us use it. The problem is that even with gas prices on the rise, they want to tax it even more.

Let's make this simple. I am going to propose just two concrete practical things we can do in Washington to give the American people some relief, create jobs, and help us be less dependent on foreign sources of oil, two ideas that would have wide bipartisan support. Let's increase American energy production, and let's block any new regulations that will drive up the production costs for energy. These are two ideas that will create jobs and alleviate the increasing pressure on gas prices.

Let's leave the ideology aside and do some practical good for Americans who are struggling out there. Let's increase American production of energy with American jobs and stop the job-stifling regulations.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ENERGY POLICY

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, we are all facing the challenge of gasoline prices adding a new burden to family budgeting as well as small businesses and large businesses alike. It couldn't come at a worse time, in light of our recession and unemployment. But it is important for us to put into perspective where we are and how we should resolve this issue.

When we look at the entire known reserves of oil and gas in the world—in the entire world—the United States has 3 percent—3 percent—and each year the United States consumes 25 percent of the energy that is used in the world. So when I hear my colleagues on the other side come to the floor and say we can drill our way out of this, I say to them: That is unrealistic and doesn't reflect the reality of what we face today.

Yes, we should have responsible drilling for oil and gas. We should be sensitive to the environment to avoid the kind of hazards and accidents we saw in the Gulf of Mexico, to protect that part of America and part of the world we believe should be preserved for future generations. But the notion if we could start drilling more our problems would go away is not only naive, it is wrong—flatout wrong.

We heard the chants of “drill, baby, drill” a year and a half ago in the course of a Presidential campaign. It is not the answer to America's energy policy, ever. We still import \$1 billion worth of oil a day into the United States. It is an indication of our dependence on foreign oil that any inter-

ruption in the Middle East or from other sources is going to raise our prices.

What should we do about it? Several things. First, on the immediate agenda, we should look at the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. The President has to decide—and said Friday he was considering—on releasing oil we have saved in this reserve to bring down prices and keep the economy moving forward. I support that. I hope the President will do that.

Secondly, we have to look at ways that the current oil pricing is being gamed by some financiers and speculators. From my point of view, this is something that needs to be not only examined but stopped. This speculation in oil prices runs up prices way too high, way too fast.

Third, take a look at the oil companies themselves. The top five oil companies are extremely profitable and, in the midst of crises, they make even more money. That is the reality.

Then, we need to step back and look at our national energy policy. How do we encourage the use of more efficient cars and trucks? Well, we don't do it by entertaining the amendment by the Republican leader in the Senate. He says the Environmental Protection Agency should step back from even encouraging the kind of fuel efficiency in cars and trucks which reduce our dependence on foreign oil and reduce pollution in the atmosphere. That is a step backward to the past. It is a rejection of basic science.

So when the Republican leader comes to the floor and gives his prescription for today's energy challenge in America, I would say to him: The patient is not going to get well. Senator, with your prescription. We have to have a coordinated energy policy moving toward fuel efficiency, reducing the use of energy, and still fueling our economy with renewable and sustainable sources of energy that don't pollute the atmosphere.

The Senator from Kentucky, who was giving us a speech this morning about energy, actually has an amendment he is preparing for the floor which removes the right of the Environmental Protection Agency to even deal with greenhouse gas emissions as they affect climate change and the world we live in. That is a stick-your-head-in-the-sand approach to an issue which future generations will look back on and say: What were they thinking; that they would ignore the reality of climate change in the world and the reality of what pollution is doing to our lungs, our health, our future. It is a reality that is being rejected by the Republican side of the aisle.

Madam President, I ask how much time is remaining in morning business?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Four minutes on the majority side.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the Chair.

ANNIVERSARY OF HEALTH CARE REFORM

Mr. DURBIN. Madam President, this is the 1-year anniversary of the President's signing of health care reform, and I am happy to stand and say it represents one of the most important pieces of legislation in decades. For too long, we let our Nation's health care crisis grow and ignored it. People who said let the market work its will, have to be honest about what the market did. The market started excluding people who had preexisting conditions—and who among us doesn't? The market started charging higher and higher prices for health insurance. The market, unfortunately, was uncontrollable.

We tried to deal with it, to bring pricing under control and deal with the realities families face across America. When I was in the most heated debate about the health care bill with tea party devotees in front of my office in Springfield, I told them: Let me tell you about some of the people in Illinois I have met. At some point, the tea party people said: Stop telling stories, DURBIN. We don't want to hear any more stories. Of course, they don't because those stories are the reason we did this. Those stories represent real lives.

Let me tell one of those stories, representing a family who comes from East Peoria, IL. This is Jill and Ric Lathrop. They have two sons, Sam and Nat. One of them has a Superman t-shirt on. They are 12 and 14 years old and they have severe hemophilia. It is a rare and costly medical condition.

Thanks to the twice-weekly injections of blood clotting replacement factor they receive, the boys are able to live happy and healthy lives—and they look pretty darn good in that picture. That lifesaving medication costs roughly \$250,000 per child, per year.

For years, the family has lived in fear they would reach the lifetime limit of their insurance plan. That was a reality. Many of these plans had a ceiling that paid no more beyond a certain amount. Well, it happened to them in 2005. The hospital where Ric works as an MRI technician instituted a \$2 million lifetime cap on benefits. For most families, that wouldn't even be an issue, but for the Lathrops, who know their annual medical expenses will always total hundreds of thousands of dollars to keep their boys alive, that was devastating.

Rather than waiting for their benefits to run out, the Lathrops moved to Peoria, where Ric found a job that provided insurance without lifetime limits. He moved his family and found a job to get an insurance policy that would keep their boys alive. When the open enrollment period for their health insurance plan rolled around, they waited on edge to see if their insurance would, once again, institute an annual or lifetime limit on care that would force them to move again to ensure adequate coverage for their sons.

Thanks to the bill we passed last year, insurance companies can no